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SUBJECT: NUCLEAR POWER: MODELS AND ANTI-MODELS ABOUND AT
DOHA FORUM

REF: A. PARIS 1447
 [B](#). DOHA 456
 [C](#). CAIRO 1307
 [D](#). KUWAIT 761

(SBU) KEY POINTS

-- The Secretary's Special Envoy for Nuclear Nonproliferation, Ambassador Jackie Wolcott, represented the U.S. Government at the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Nuclear Energy Forum November 10-11 and spoke forthrightly about the safety, security, and proliferation risks that accompany the deployment of nuclear power.

-- Although Iran,s Vice President was expected to address the conference, the Iranians ultimately did not attend. Nevertheless, Wolcott made direct reference to Iran in her speech, citing it as the "anti model" to the open and transparent way a country should approach nuclear power.

-- Qatari officials announced that Qatar was moving ahead on studies of adopting nuclear power. Meanwhile, the draft MOU on civil nuclear cooperation with the U.S. that would pave the way for enhanced cooperation with Texas A&M is pending a decision in the Prime Minister,s office.

-- Egypt announced that a draft law covering safety, security, safeguards, and liability would be sent to Parliament later this month, with finalization expected by June 2009. The Egyptians also told Wolcott that a final decision on Egypt,s nuclear construction tender would likely be rendered by January 2009.

-- Oman and Kuwait are also studying adoption of nuclear power.

(SBU) COMMENT

-- Participants at the conference made repeated references to nuclear power,s benefits in combating climate change and as a diversified source of energy alongside solar and wind. Participants also stressed the importance of establishing proper national infrastructures to support nascent nuclear power programs.

-- Seldom mentioned, however, was the need to mitigate the inherent proliferation risks associated with nuclear power. Other nuclear suppliers used the forum to promote their services with little emphasis on accompanying responsibilities.

-- Amb. Wolcott,s speech, which highlighted frankly the importance of tangible commitments to the highest safety, security and nonproliferation standards, was the exception and therefore an important contribution to this conference.

END KEY POINTS AND COMMENT.

FORUM BACKGROUND

¶1. (U) On November 10-11, Ambassador Wolcott participated in the MENA Nuclear Energy Forum in Doha, Qatar, during which she delivered a special address. Additional speakers included representatives of regional governments (the UAE, Egypt, Qatar, Oman, and Yemen); multilateral organizations (Gulf Cooperation Council, Arab Atomic Energy Agency, and the International Atomic Energy Agency); and the nuclear industry (Thorium Power, Areva, Electricite de France, Total, Suez-Tractebel, and Atomic Energy of Canada Limited). The event was sponsored by Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation (Kahramaa), Qatar Petroleum (QP), Thorium Power, Electricite de France (EDF), and ACWA International, with additional support from the Qatar Science and Technology Park.

IRAN AS COUNTEREXAMPLE

¶2. (SBU) In her special address, "Nuclear Power: Benefits and Responsibilities," Wolcott addressed the unique safety, security, and proliferation risks associated with nuclear power. She emphasized the "right way" of pursuing nuclear power - carefully, transparently, and in adherence to international nonproliferation, safety, and security norms - as well as the advantages of civil nuclear cooperation to help states pursue a responsible path.

¶3. (SBU) In response to last-minute indications that her speech would be preceded by an address by Reza Aghazadeh, Vice President of Iran and President of the (UN Sanctioned) Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, she portrayed Iran as the "anti model" for how a state should approach nuclear power. Though the U.S. was deeply dismayed that Iran had been given such a prominent role at an ostensibly legitimate conference on nuclear power, the Iranian delegation, without explanation, ultimately did not attend the conference. Wolcott's full remarks are available at <http://www.state.gov/t/isn/rls/rm/111757.htm>.

SUPPLIERS - PLEASE BUY OUR STUFF

¶4. (SBU) In addition to the United States, other major nuclear suppliers in attendance included France, Belgium, and Canada (all representatives of their state-owned industries). In stark contrast to the U.S. call for a measured and responsible approach to nuclear power, presentations from Areva, EDF, Total, Suez-Tractebel, and Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) promoted goods and services without mentioning the responsibilities that accompany nuclear power.

¶5. (SBU) For example, Total informed the conference goers that it was the "most diversified major in the Middle East" and through its partnership with Areva and Suez was a great candidate to oversee a build-own-operate contract for the UAE's nuclear power plants. A Scientific Advisor to Areva, after explaining the numerous hurdles facing a state new to nuclear power, assured the audience that "help was available" via the IAEA, AFNI (the fee-based French government agency recently established to assist emerging nuclear energy states, see Ref A) or other consultants (such as himself). AECL carefully described the advantages of continuous refueling of its CANDU-6 reactor, while leaving unspoken any reference to the proliferation advantages and disadvantages associated with the operation of heavy water reactors.

¶6. (SBU) In the end, Wolcott's was the only presentation that emphasized the need to mitigate the proliferation risks

of nuclear power, despite the conference setting a few hundred miles from Iran,s nuclear power plant at Bushehr.

QATAR - MOVING SLOWLY

¶17. (U) Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, Qatar,s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy and Industry, announced in his address that Qatar was "reassess(ing) the role that nuclear energy might play in (its) domestic energy mix." Later in the program, the manager of Kahramaa (Qatar's power and water utility), Yousuf Janahi, announced that an expert committee, including representatives from Qatar Petroleum and Kahramaa, has proposed a detailed study of the prospects of a national nuclear power program. The primary uncertainties, he noted, included the ability of Qatar,s electricity grid to support a 1,000 MW nuclear power plant and finding a suitable site for it. These and other questions would be studied in detail with the assistance of an unidentified outside consultant.

¶18. (SBU) On the sidelines of the Forum, Wolcott met with Dr. Rashid Al-Kuwari, Director of the Radiological Protection and Nuclear Energy Department of the Ministry of Environment. Al-Kuwari explained that the Ministry of Environment, recently formed to replace the Supreme Council for the Environment and Natural Reserves, would act as Qatar,s regulator for nuclear applications. This body would also oversee the country,s progress towards nuclear power, including the conclusion of technical cooperation agreements, adoption of international conventions, and development of a strategic plan. Separately, the Ministry of Energy (with support from the Qatar Foundation) would oversee nuclear-related research and training.

¶19. (SBU) Asked for the status of the nuclear cooperation Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that the U.S. proposed in May (Ref B), Al-Kuwari explained that it was now in the Prime Minister,s office for a decision, expected "in ten days." He appeared to take careful note when Wolcott encouraged swift Qatari concurrence, since its entry into force (along with finalization of Qatar,s safeguards agreement with the IAEA) would allow Texas A&M to launch a joint nuclear applications education program with Qatar University and would pave the way for the founding of a formal nuclear engineering program at Texas A&M/Qatar under the Qatar Foundation (QF) at Education City in Doha.

¶10. (SBU) In a separate meeting, QF Science Advisor Tidu Maini told Wolcott that everything was in place to launch the Texas A&M program, but that nothing could commence absent "the blasted MOU." He informed Wolcott that QF had just declined a French-proposed training program that could have begun immediately, since it preferred to build on existing (non-nuclear) engineering programs at Texas A&M/Qatar. To try and expedite the process, Maini proposed that Wolcott send a letter to Sheikha Mozah, Chair of QF,s Board of Directors and wife of the Amir, stressing the importance of the MOU. Wolcott agreed, and a letter to be delivered on November 18 (a previous letter from Wolcott encouraging action was delivered on June 16, 2008).

EGYPT - PROCEEDING STEP-BY-STEP

¶11. (U) In his keynote address, Egyptian Minister of Electricity and Energy, Dr. Hassan Younes, reported that Egypt had established a Supreme Council for Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy to explore ways Egypt can enhance its existing nuclear infrastructure to support a nuclear power program. He noted that a draft law covering safety, security, safeguards, and liability would be sent to Parliament in the new session beginning the week of November 16, and he announced that Egypt would award its consultancy tender (to cover site selection, project implementation, and construction of its first nuclear power plant) by the end of

the year. Regarding civil nuclear cooperation, he noted that the Egyptians were "looking for all the help we can get," but also amenable to sharing its own experience with states just beginning to develop nuclear infrastructure.

¶12. (SBU) During a bilateral meeting with Wolcott, Younes elaborated that the draft law before Parliament would call for the creation of a national nuclear regulator and should be decided on by June of 2009. He conceded that the decision on the consultancy contract could slip to January. In response to Wolcott,s advocacy for Bechtel,s bid, he energetically reassured her that the process is proceeding "step-by-step and by the book" consistent with international rules.

¶13. (SBU) With regards to the "working group" designed to examine the rejuvenation of U.S.-Egyptian civil nuclear cooperation (see Ref C), Dr. Khalil Yasso (First Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity and Energy) explained that a proposal, which would establish points of contact for assistance with (1) safety training and (2) licensing, siting, and NPP operation, is now being finalized and could be transmitted to the United States in about one week. Consistent with this, Younes later stressed that Egypt,s current focus was on regulation and safety.

OMAN - STILL NO "THERE" THERE

¶14. (SBU) In his address to the forum, Chairman of the Omani Public Authority for Electricity and Water Mohammed Al Mahrouqi reported that nuclear power is "on the agenda" in Oman, as are solar power and wind energy. That said, during his bilateral meeting with Wolcott, he elaborated that Oman is "still gathering information" and hoping that the IAEA can visit to help Oman develop a strategy once its newly minted IAEA membership is "implemented."

KUWAIT - DOING IT DEMOCRATICALLY

¶15. (SBU) On the margins of the forum, Wolcott met with Adnan ¶A. Shihab-Eldin, former OPEC and IAEA official and current advisor to the Kuwaiti government. He informed Wolcott that that Kuwait may soon announce the formation of a "high level committee" with an executive office tasked to examine nuclear power in Kuwait. He commented that, as a democracy, any decisions on nuclear power in Kuwait will be slowed relative to other states in the region with more autocratic decision-making structures. (Note: Shihab-Eldin was not in Kuwait during Wolcott,s visit in June - see Ref D. End Note.)

¶16. (SBU) Shihab-Eldin added that he had attended the GNEP ministerial in Paris and that Kuwait likes what it sees so far, but wants to learn more. He expressed a degree of residual mistrust about the political objectives of the partnership (asking to what extent it could lead to a change in legal rights under the NPT). Speaking more generally, he expressed support for initiatives designed to provide reliable access to nuclear fuel, adding that he had personally advised the Government of Kuwait to support the Nuclear Threat Initiative proposal to establish an IAEA fuel bank.

GCC PROJECT - NOT DEAD, BUT EVOLVING

¶17. (SBU) During their bilateral meeting, Shihab-Eldin also provided Wolcott some insight into the origins and status of the GCC-wide effort to explore nuclear power. Based on his experience as an early advisor to the effort, he reported that the GCC approach was originally proposed by Qatar to the remaining partners. Following initial resistance, the Saudi king "put his weight behind" the decision to launch the

regional look into nuclear power. Following an IAEA-supported pre-feasibility study, the GCC secretariat is interested in putting together a full-time committee that will work with a consultant on a full-scale feasibility study. The individual efforts by GCC member states to explore national nuclear power programs began when the UAE made clear it would move ahead on its own in parallel with the GCC effort.

¶18. (SBU) In his personal view, Shihab-Eldin said the GCC could help "harmonize" national programs in the region, though he advised against establishing a "GCC superstructure" to try and oversee and regulate power plants in more than one state. An example of the merits of a regional approach is creating efficiencies to facilitate human resource development or grid improvements. In addition, a regional approach could help harmonize policy positions, such as in the development of multilateral mechanisms for reliable access to nuclear fuel.

¶19. (U) Ambassador Wolcott has cleared this message.
LeBaron

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